



# City of San Antonio

## Veterans Affairs Commission

Volume III, Issue I

January 2005

### Mission Statement

*The Veterans Affairs Commission will serve as the community's liaison and advocate for veterans affairs; advise the City Council on issues affecting San Antonio Veterans and their families; and make recommendations for improving services.*

### Inside this Issue:

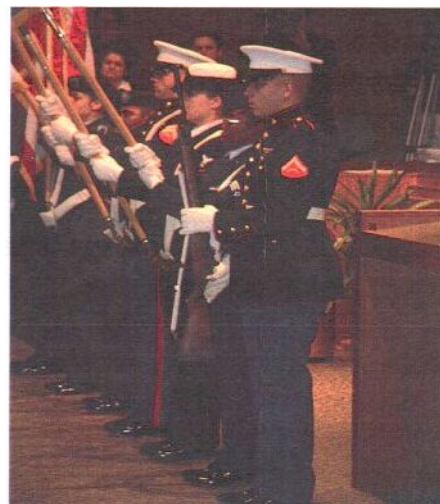
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DEPARTMENT

### Chair's Message— by Karen S. Rankin

**H**appy Holidays! As we look back on the past season and recall the good times we had enjoying family and friends, many also thought about their loved ones serving in the military. Why should we fill our minds with the unhappiness and horror of war in this holiday season? Why should we not? Each of us enjoys the freedoms of our great country because of young people like those currently serving. Many of us wonder what we can do to help. Let me give you some examples. Veteran's services organizations like American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and others have programs to send useful items to service men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan.



The Medina Regional Security Operations  
Center Joint Color Guard

If you're so inclined, call one of the organizations and offer your financial support. If you would prefer to do something in person, call Judith Markelz at the Soldiers Assistance Center at Ft. Sam Houston (241-0811). Find out what Judith needs to make the days more pleasant for the many recovering soldiers and marines at Brooke Army Medical Center. As you can imagine, these young people like to have access to family and friends via phones. Check to see if the Assistance Center needs phone cards to give to those recuperating. Stop in and visit with the recovering service people and their families. Give them a bit of your time. So often, what you do that is most appreciated costs little and takes just a few minutes.

As mentioned previously, your Veterans Affairs Commission provides advice and information about issues of concern to veterans and their families, to the City Council and the Mayor. We monitor base closing discussions and voice concerns about how such closings will impact veterans and their families. We have taken some giant steps this year to fulfill those tasks. At the request of the Mayor and City Council, the VAC now arranges the San Antonio Patriot's Award and Ceremony. We presented the first two awards in September and repeated the event in December for two Marines. One of those Marines was killed in action and the award was presented to his family. In March, the Patriot Award will be presented to one of our local military organizations that played a huge role in the Global War on Terror. Another part of our mission is to keep the citizens and veterans of San Antonio aware of the VAC's activities and to solicit information from them about veterans concerns. Check our web site at [www.sanantonio.gov/veterans](http://www.sanantonio.gov/veterans).

## Supporting Our Troops

### Free packing materials

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is offering free packing materials to spouses and families of military members who are deployed overseas. To take advantage of this service call: 1-800-610-8734 and press 1 (for English and then 3 for an operator!). USPS will send you free boxes, packing materials, tape and mailing labels. These products are to be used to mail care packages to service members. Call the number and within seconds you will talk to a United States Postal worker who will take your name and address and send you a box of materials for FREE that should be arriving in 10 days. Included are 25 large boxes, 25 small boxes, tape, and mailing labels for all. For more information, please call Juan Saucedo at (210) 587-4444.

### A Good Word From Home. By: John Cavazos, Veterans Affairs Commission Member

Since the beginning of the current War in Iraq, many of us have friends or loved ones deployed to various locations in the world. Being deployed for months at a time can be a very trying experience, and sometimes a little news from home or a package can lift your spirits tremendously. Therefore, when I started to see some of my friends being deployed, I felt the need to take the time to drop them a letter or package in the mail.

While I was deployed to Operation Desert Shield in 1993, I received a few packages from my mother (the only one who wrote me). I was grateful that I had received some correspondence from home, but I also remember that some of my fellow soldiers never received anything. So, I took it upon myself to share my care packages with my fellow comrades and introduced them to chips, salsa and Big Red. When word got around that I had a package come in from San Antonio, my buddies lined up to see what "we" got. My mom's packages were a hit, and they were usually hand delivered to me on post with three or four escorts.

So, when I found out that a few people I knew were on their way to support the War, I felt the need to reciprocate. I sent out a package to a Navy friend of mine who was deployed to Djibouti, Africa. The package had the essentials, chapstick, eyedrops, lotion and chips and salsa. I also sent out two cards to some members of the 433rd AES that were all signed by the commissioners of VAC, that simply thanked them for their service. When they received them, they sent me an email thanking the VAC for our support and were grateful that they had received a letter. Though these packages and cards were not much, I felt something was better than nothing. So, if you know of someone who is deployed and have their address, contact me at 210-367-0741 so we, can put something in the mail for them. Sometimes, a good word from home can really make a difference in a soldier's life, whether you know them or not.

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Event: U.S. Army All-American Bowl

Date: 01/15/05

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Alamodome

Event: Veterans Affairs Commission Meeting

Date: 02/21/05

Time: 3:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

Location: 114 W. Commerce, Plaza C Room

Event: Veterans Affairs Commission Meeting

Date: 01/24/05

Time: 3:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

Location: 114 W. Commerce, Plaza C Room

Event: Patriot Award Ceremony

Date: 03/17/05

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Location: 114 W. Commerce, City Council Chambers

## **Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005** by Ed Davis, Economic Development Manager, City of San Antonio

In 2005, the Department of Defense will conduct another round of base realignment and closure (BRAC). During the last round in 1995, the City of San Antonio was significantly impacted with the closure of Kelly Air Force Base. To prepare for the upcoming round of BRAC in 2005, the City is partnering with the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, Bexar County and City Public Service through the establishment of the San Antonio Military Missions Task Force called SAMM. The Executive Director of SAMM is retired Air Force Brigadier General John Jernigan, the former wing commander at Brooks Air Force Base. The SAMM has taken an active role in keeping the community and senior leadership in Washington fully aware of the military value associated with the three active military bases in the San Antonio region (Fort Sam Houston, Lackland Air Force Base and Randolph Air Force Base), as well as the Air Force missions still located at Brooks City-Base and KellyUSA. These bases and missions provide some 89,000 jobs in the region and contribute an economic impact of some \$5 billion. Following are some frequently asked questions about BRAC and the timeline of actions to occur in 2005:

### **QUESTION: What is BRAC?**

**ANSWER:** "BRAC" is an acronym which stands for base realignment and closure. It is the process the DoD has previously used to reorganize its installation infrastructure to more efficiently and effectively support its forces, increase operational readiness and facilitate new ways of doing business. DoD anticipates that BRAC 2005 will build upon processes used in previous BRAC efforts. The last round of BRAC occurred in 1995.

### **QUESTION: How will BRAC help achieve a transformation of the military?**

**ANSWER:** BRAC provides a singular opportunity to reshape Defense infrastructure to optimize military readiness. The BRAC 2005 process will help find innovative ways to consolidate, realign, or find alternative uses for current facilities to ensure that the U.S. continues to field the best-prepared and best-equipped military in the world. BRAC will also enable the U.S. military to better match facilities to forces, meet the threats and challenges of a new century, and make the wisest use of limited defense dollars.

### **QUESTION: What benefit does the Department of Defense anticipate from a future BRAC round?**

**ANSWER:** The Department will be able to divest itself of unnecessary installation infrastructure and use the resultant savings for improving fighting capabilities and quality of life for military forces. This will allow the Department to rationalize installation infrastructure with 21st century national security imperatives.

### **QUESTION: What are some of the major elements of the BRAC 2005 process and what will ensure it will be fair?**

**ANSWER:** The process is governed by law; specifically, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990. The process begins with a threat assessment of the future national security environment, followed by the development of a force structure plan and basing requirements to meet these threats. DoD then applies published selection criteria to determine which installations to recommend for realignment and closure. The Secretary of Defense will publish a report containing the realignment and closure recommendations, forwarding supporting documentation to an independent commission appointed by the President, in consultation with congressional leadership. The commission has the authority to change the Department's recommendations if it determines that the Secretary deviated substantially from the force structure plan and/or selection criteria. The Commission will hold regional meetings to solicit public input prior to making its recommendations. History has shown that the use of an independent commission and public meetings make the process as open and fair as possible. ( continued on page 4)



## Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 (Cont. from page 3)

**QUESTION:** How will BRAC 2005 be different from past rounds?

**ANSWER:** The process outlined in the BRAC Act of 1990, Public Law 101-510, as amended, remains primarily the same as used in the three previous rounds. This process has served the Department well during the previous rounds and is designed to be as fair as possible. However, there are some changes. Military value will continue to be an element of the published selection criteria. In previous rounds, as DoD policy, the military value criteria took priority over the other criteria. However, in BRAC 2005, there is now a statutory requirement that military value be the primary consideration.



KellyUSA (former Kelly Air Force Base)

**QUESTION:** What's the timeline for the 2005 BRAC round?

**ANSWER:** The 2005 BRAC round has actually been underway for over a year with the publishing of DoD's selection criteria and the collection of data from all of the bases and missions. In 2005, the following actions will occur:

- March 15, 2005 -- the President nominates nine (9) members to the Senate for appointment to the BRAC Commission.
- May 16, 2005 -- the Secretary of Defense must forward DoD's recommendations to the BRAC Commission.
- September 8, 2005 -- The BRAC Commission reports its findings and recommendations to the President.
- September 23, 2005 -- The President approves the Commission recommendations and forwards the list to Congress. The list is binding within 45 "legislative" days unless Congress enacts a joint resolution of disapproval.
- October 20, 2005 -- If the President rejects the Commission recommendations, the Commission has until this date to submit a revised list to the President.
- November 7, 2005 -- The President must approve the revised recommendations and forward the list to Congress or the process ends. The list is binding within 45 "legislative" days unless Congress enact a joint resolution of disapproval.

**QUESTION:** Which installations will be looked at in this round?

**ANSWER:** All military installations and missions within the United States and its territories will be examined as part of this process.

**QUESTION:** How many installations will be closed or missions realigned?

**ANSWER:** It's too early to say and there are no specific numbers or "targets." Using specific selection criteria that emphasize military value, DoD must complete a comprehensive review before it can determine which installations should be closed or which missions should be realigned to another base.

**QUESTION:** How much has been saved through previous BRAC rounds?

**ANSWER:** The four previous BRAC rounds have eliminated approximately 20 percent of DoD's capacity that existed in 1988 and, through 2001, produced net savings of approximately \$16.7 billion, which includes the cost of environmental clean-up. Recurring savings beyond 2001 are approximately \$7 billion annually. In independent studies conducted over previous years, both the general accounting office and the Congressional Budget Office have consistently supported the Department's view that realigning and closing unneeded military installations produces savings that far exceed costs.

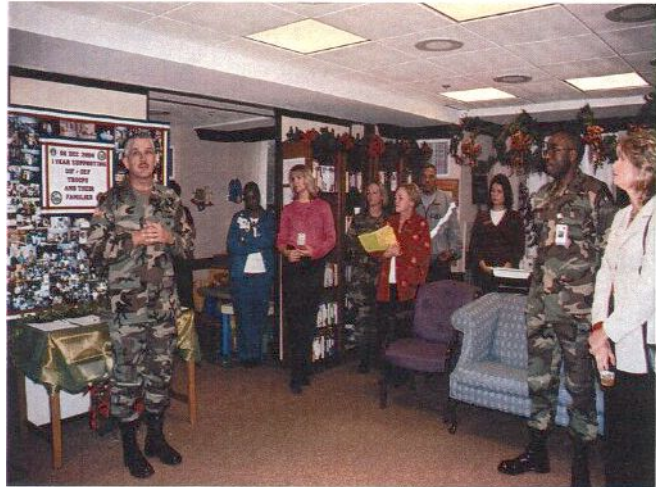
**QUESTION:** How will the BRAC Commission members be selected? (continued on page 7)

## Soldiers, Family Assistance Center Celebrates First Anniversary

by: Phil Reidinger, Director of Public Affairs Office, FT. Sam Houston

**O**ne year ago, volunteers led by facility coordinator Judith Markelz opened a reception area in the Powless Guest House for Soldiers recovering at Brooke Army Medical Center from wounds received while supporting operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Soldiers assigned to the BAMC Medical Hold Company and visiting family members quickly adopted the facility as a favorite place to meet and communicate with family, friends and comrades still stationed with their units in Iraq and Afghanistan. "We opened this facility with borrowed furniture, old computers and a coffee pot from the post lending closet. **"The day we opened there were 47 visitors.**

**As of today, December 6, there have been more than 28,000 visitors."** Markelz said.



Col. Garry Atkins, U.S. Army Garrison Commander, thanks the Soldiers and Family Assistance Center volunteers who donated time and support.

The assistance center will be getting new furniture. Several telephones and computer terminals provide communications links for Soldiers and visiting families. The community has responded with donations of tickets to sporting and entertainment events in town, a large screen television and DVD player, video games, books, magazines, toys for children and plenty of baked goods and donated snack items that arrive every day. Markelz notes that bottled water and phone cards are constant favorites with Soldiers.

Initially, Army Community Center staff manned the reception desk from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the Soldiers assigned to the Medical Hold Company themselves manned the desk after 4 p.m. until 9 p.m., keeping the center open 12 hours per day. Today the facility is still run by post and community volunteers, with the help of Soldiers who know what their colleagues need most when visiting the center. "I could tell you about the emotional experiences every one of these past 365 days have brought," Markelz said. She recalled the frantic middle-aged couple standing in the middle of the assistance center desperately trying to grasp the reality that their son has been injured, but has not yet arrived at BAMC.

The Soldier and Family Assistance Center is a unique program that offers a safe environment outside the hospital for Soldiers while they continue with outpatient treatments. It also is a welcome place for families to gather for networking and to learn to be an integral part of their Soldier's recovery process. "The significance of this first year anniversary is to acknowledge an effort by many volunteers and incredible support by the San Antonio community to help our military men and women as they return from battlefields, their lives and the lives of their families forever changed," Markelz said. She keeps a record of all donations to acknowledge every heartfelt gift delivered to the center.

Colonel Garry Atkins, U.S. Army Garrison Commander, recalled the first meetings with Kim Miller, Judith Markelz and the Army Community Service Center staff when patients began arriving at BAMC and were soon followed by their families. "This anniversary celebration today is an opportunity to thank you – members of the post and San Antonio communities for all that you do to support the Soldiers and Family Assistance Center," he said. (continued on page 6)

## **Military Retirees Receiving VA Compensation May be Eligible for CRSC**

by: Craig Erickson, Bexar County Veterans Service Officer

**M**military retirees who have 20 or more years of creditable service, who are entitled to retired pay, and who are receiving compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for service-connected disabilities, may be eligible for Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) if their injuries or disabilities are combat related.

Because military retirees must apply for Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) benefits, many retirees who may be eligible, are not yet receiving these benefits. Retirees may also believe that if they were not awarded a Purple Heart, they are not eligible; however, the criteria clearly allows for other conditions that do not warrant the award of the Purple Heart.

CRSC is compensation paid by the military service and pays some or all of the retiree's retired pay that was previously offset by payment of VA compensation. CRSC pay is also tax free. Combat related disabilities include disabilities resulting from an injury for which a veteran was awarded the Purple Heart, but may also include other injuries which were the direct result of armed conflict, injuries received while engaged in hazardous service, injuries that resulted from the performance of duty under conditions simulating war, or injuries that were caused as a result of an instrumentality of war. CRSC also includes disabilities awarded by the VA on the basis of presump-

tions relating to exposure to Agent Orange, radiation, mustard gas or lewisite, and Gulf War service.

Retirees who believe they may be eligible for CRSC should contact their Veterans Service Officer (VSO) for further information. Your VSO can explain the criteria and assist you in completing a DD Form 2860 that will be sent to the military service from which you are retired. Retirees who are receiving Concurrent Disability Pay (CDP), and who are also eligible to receive CRSC may elect the benefit that either pays the higher amount or offers the better tax advantage, since CDP is taxable.

If you have any questions about Combat Related Special Compensation, feel free to contact Craig Erickson, the Bexar County Veterans Service Officer at 210-335-6737.



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## **Soldiers, Family Assistance Center Celebrates First Anniversary** (continued from page 5)

Master Sergeant Pam Nelson, a BAMC patient assigned to the Medical Hold Company, spoke on behalf of the Soldiers thanking the community for all the donations. "This facility is a place for Soldiers to come to and meet with other Soldiers and center volunteers when they have no one else. Please continue to support the center for Soldiers who may be coming here in the future after we are gone," she said.

For more information about volunteering and donating items to the Soldier and Family Assistance Center and various Soldier and family support activities, call Judith Markelz at (210) 241-0811.



## Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 (Cont. from page 4)

**ANSWER:** The BRAC Act of 1990, as amended, specifies the selection process for the nine Commissioners, who must be nominated by the President for Senate confirmation no later than March 15, 2005. In selecting individuals for nominations for appointments to the Commission, the President will consult with the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the majority leader of the Senate concerning the appointment of two members each, and consult with the minority leaders of the House of Representatives and the Senate concerning the appointment of one member each. In other words, the President has three appointments with "NO" consultation while the other six nominations require congressional consultation (two with the House Speaker, two with the Senate majority leader, and one each with the minority leader of the House and the Senate).



Since 1916, Kelly AFB was a vital part of the surrounding community. Eighty years later, Kelly AFB faced closure; from its ending emerged a new beginning — KellyUSA.

## City's Military Recognition Ceremony by: Angela Rivera, Economic Development Specialist

On December 16th, the City and the Veterans Affairs Commission recognized two of San Antonio's local military heroes who have served with distinction and bravery in the Global War on Terrorism.

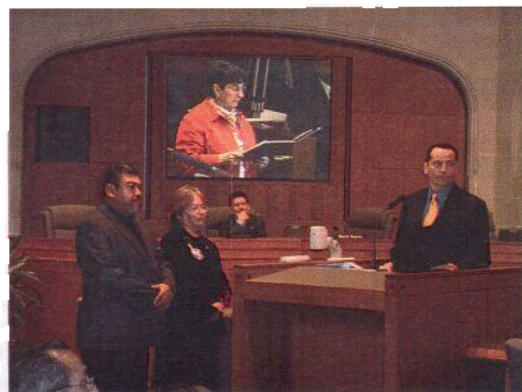
A thirteen-year U.S. Marine Corps veteran, SSgt. Eric Alva, sustained severe injuries to his arm and legs when he stepped on a landmine, while serving in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Mr. Alva's leg had to be amputated. He has since retired and is attending the University of Incarnate Word to become an Athletic Trainer and help rehabilitate people with similar disabilities.



SSgt. Eric Alva (left) with parents Fidelis and Lois Alva

A nine-year U.S. Marine Corps SSgt. Gene Ramirez was killed in action at Fullajah, Iraq on November 10th, while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. SSgt. Ramirez was a graduate from Harlandale High School, and was killed when a mortar round exploded near him. He is survived by his parents and sister who reside in Lytle, Texas.

At these quarterly ceremonies, the City honors local military personnel and civilians who were killed, wounded, missing in action or prisoners of war during military operations in support of the Global War on Terrorism with the City's *Patriot Award*. Also, the City intends to honor individual military units and plans to do this on March 17, 2005, in the City Council Chambers at 1:00 p.m.



SSgt. Gene Ramirez's parents Pedro and Jo Ann Ramirez



City of San Antonio  
Economic Development Department  
Veterans Affairs Commission  
P.O. Box 839966  
San Antonio, TX 78283-3966

**FOR QUESTIONS OR TO BE ADDED TO THE MAILING LIST :**

**Nancy Sheppard, VAC Coordinator**  
Phone: 210.207.8080  
Fax: 210.207.8151  
Email: [veterans@sanantonio.gov](mailto:veterans@sanantonio.gov)

***“Addressing Veterans Issues  
in the Community”***

**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**

**[WWW.SANANTONIO.GOV/VETERANS](http://WWW.SANANTONIO.GOV/VETERANS)**



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Irvin Padgett	District—6
Reuben G. Salas	District—7
Manuel S. Perez	District—8
John B. Cavazos	District—Mayor

**Services & Information Web sites for Veterans**

**Texas Workforce Web Site**

- Texas Workforce Commission (includes Governors Job Bank-State of Texas government jobs) — [www.twc.state.tx.us](http://www.twc.state.tx.us)

**Government Job Search Web Sites**

(Federal, County, City)

- Veterans information-how to apply for federal jobs — [www.opm.gov/veterans/index.htm](http://www.opm.gov/veterans/index.htm)
- Federal Job Listings — [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afss](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afss)
- Air Force Civilian Jobs (CANS) — [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/palacecompass](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/palacecompass)
- Air Force Civilian Jobs/job kit — [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/palacecompass](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/palacecompass)
- Army Civilian Personnel — [www.cpol.army.mil](http://www.cpol.army.mil)
- City of S.A. Job site — [www.sanantonio.gov/humres](http://www.sanantonio.gov/humres)
- Bexar County Job site — [www.co.bexar.tx.us](http://www.co.bexar.tx.us)

**Nationwide Job Search Web Sites**

- Nationwide job search — [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)
- America's Job Bank (AJB) — [www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us)

**Other Job Search Sites**

- Texas Employment Network — [www.warmsprings.org/WSRC/TEN/index.html](http://www.warmsprings.org/WSRC/TEN/index.html)
- San Antonio Job Network — [www.sajobnet.com](http://www.sajobnet.com)
- Southwest Research Institute — [www.swri.org](http://www.swri.org)
- UT Health Science Center — [www.uthscsa.edu](http://www.uthscsa.edu)
- State of Texas — [www.TexasOnline.com](http://www.TexasOnline.com)
- Bexar County — [www.bexar.org](http://www.bexar.org)
- City of San Antonio — [www.sanantonio.gov](http://www.sanantonio.gov)

**Veterans' Information Web Sites**

- Department of Veterans Affairs — [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)
- Texas Veterans Land Board — [www.glo.state.tx.us](http://www.glo.state.tx.us)
- Texas Veterans Commission — [www.tvc.state.tx.us](http://www.tvc.state.tx.us)
- Disabled American Veterans — [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org)
- Veterans of Foreign Wars — [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)
- The American Legion — [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)
- National Veterans Organization — [www.nva.org](http://www.nva.org)
- National Veterans Legal Services Program — [www.nvlsp.org](http://www.nvlsp.org)
- AMVETS — [www.amvets.org](http://www.amvets.org)
- NPRC (request for records) — [www.nara.gov/regional/mpr.html](http://www.nara.gov/regional/mpr.html)
- The Retired Enlisted Association — [www.trea.org](http://www.trea.org)
- The Retired Officers Association — [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org) or [www.satiao.org](http://www.satiao.org)
- National Center for PTSD — [www.ncptsd.org](http://www.ncptsd.org)
- National Committee for Employer Support of Guard and Reserve — [www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org)

**Veterans Job Search Web Sites**

- A Veterans Employment & Resource Service — [www.veteran.net](http://www.veteran.net)
- Transition Assistance Online — [www.taonline.com](http://www.taonline.com)
- VFW Job Web site — [www.vetjobs.com](http://www.vetjobs.com)
- DOL Veterans' Reference Program — [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)